

Mike Wallace on James Hoffa, February 20, 1964

*Mike Wallace:* This is *Dimension* and this is Mike Wallace with today's personal close up. There's just about no public figure I can remember in the time I've known the species who was more convinced he is right than Jimmy Hoffa. No matter that the government perseveres in its efforts to put him in jail on a variety of charges. No matter that assorted publications have labeled him friend of the hoodlum empire and "Public Enemy Number 1." Jimmy Hoffa remains defiant, unreconstructed, and above all else, convinced that he is always right. My close up on Jimmy Hoffa in a moment. A few months back I spent four hours with Jimmy Hoffa in a Philadelphia hotel suite. In the course of the afternoon, we spoke of many things and it wasn't the substance of his opinions that I found startling. They were perfectly predictable. It was that he was always so sure he had the answers and that those who disagreed with him were either naive, unthinking, or incompetent. We spent a while talking about the Attorney General of the United States, Robert Kennedy. It's a subject on which Hoffa waxes eloquent, and I mentioned in passing that there are those who perceive some similarity in the personalities of Bobby Kennedy and Jimmy Hoffa.

*James R. Hoffa:* I would venture to say that knowing what I have done to get where I'm at now and what it took to help build it, be part of building this union, that Bobby Kennedy would have found out that it's one thing to say people have to do things, or I'll make them, then be able to get people to do things without making them. I just wonder could he do it?

*Mike Wallace:* But do you see any validity in the suggestion by some that there is a similarity between the two human beings?

*James R. Hoffa:* I would hope not.

*Mike Wallace:* Hoffa has proved on many occasions that he is not at all concerned with his so-called public image. He has made enemies among the press, in government, and even among his fellow labor leaders. I asked him if he had no concern for what the public thinks of him.

*James R. Hoffa:* Not to the extent that it would change me for fighting what I believe is right or saying what I think I have a right to say in behalf of our members or what I think is right.

*Mike Wallace:* In other words, you concern yourself with a good or bad opinion of the public, the press, the government, or your fellow unionists only insofar as you finish it?

*James R. Hoffa:* As far as I believe that it does not interfere with what I'm elected for, what I stand for, and what I really truly believe.

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*Mike Wallace:* Back with a closing note from Jimmy Hoffa in a moment. Jimmy Hoffa, boss of the Teamsters, regards few men as his equal, in labor or in management. He had words of praise for almost no one I can remember. When I asked him what prominent Americans he admired most, he could think of none. We talked of morality in business, in dealing with other human beings, and I asked him if he had a code he adhered to, a set of standards by which he operates.

*James R. Hoffa:* For me to sit here and tell you that I would know what I will do the rest of my life, until it's happened, based upon some standard I would put on paper, I would be a liar, because circumstances and conditions create standards. And until those circumstances and conditions arrive, I don't think anybody has a standard that is rigidly adhered to and lived through all their life.

*Mike Wallace:* Jimmy Hoffa is a man who is not without some foresight. Last May at a ceremony in Washington, he gave the Boy Scouts of America \$336,000 on behalf of his union for the construction of a new Scout center in the nation's capital. The Teamsters Union, he said, has a strong interest in the Boy Scouts of America. Many Boy Scouts may one day be Teamster Union members. This has been *Dimension* on the CBS Radio Network and this is Mike Wallace, a personal close up.